

## **REMARKS**

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Office Action dated June 4, 2003.

In this Amendment, Applicants have amended the drawings, cancelled claims 3-4 without prejudice or disclaimer, amended claims 2 and 5, and added new claims 6-22. Claim 2 has been amended solely to improve grammatical clarity, and not for any reasons related to patentability. Claim 5 has been amended and claims 6-22 have been added to more clearly define the claimed invention.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 1-5 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 1-2 and 5-22 are pending in this application.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the amendments to the drawings, the amendments to the claims, and the subject matter of new claims 6-22. No new matter was introduced.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to the drawings for minor informalities. Applicants file herewith a Submission of Corrected Drawings that amend Figs. 1-3 to include the term --PRIOR ART-- as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner approve the corrected drawings and withdraw this objections.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected originally presented claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Okabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,309,232) ("Okabe"). Insofar as the Okabe may apply to pending claims 1-2 and 5-22, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. For anticipation under 35 U.S.C. §102, the reference must teach every aspect of the claimed invention either explicitly or implicitly. M.P.E.P. 706.02. Because Okabe does not teach every aspect of claims 1-2 and 5-22 either

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alone or in combination with the other aspects of the claimed invention, Okabe does not anticipate any of those claims.

Okabe does not disclose or suggest the invention claimed in independent claim

1. For example, independent claim 1 recites, among other things, “a standing mechanism provided between the lever and the second connector, and the standing mechanism standing the lever when temporarily fitting the first connector to the second connector.” The Examiner asserts that on page 3 of the Office Action that the standing mechanism allegedly comprises engaging protrusion 30, tapered surface 30A, insertion grooves 36, and engagement step 37 in Okabe. However, Okabe does not disclose “standing the lever,” or how these alleged standing mechanism portions “[stand] the lever when temporarily fitting the first connector to the second connector.” Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of claim 1 and its respective dependent claims.

Okabe does not disclose or suggest the invention claimed in independent claim

2. For example, independent claim 2 recites, among other things, that “the lever is outward fitted to and detachably pivoted on a supporting engagement portion of the first connector” and that “the engagement portions and the groove portion are disposed substantially symmetrically about the supporting engagement portion.” Okabe does not disclose that “the engagement portions and the groove portion are disposed substantially symmetrically about the supporting engagement portion.” Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of claim 2 and its respective dependent claims.

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Okabe does not disclose or suggest the invention claimed in independent claim 6. For example, independent claim 6 recites, among other things, that "the lever is outwardly fitted to and detachably pivoted on a supporting engagement portion on the first connector, a plurality of engagement portions are provided in the hood portion of the first connector, and the engagement portions are disposed substantially symmetrically about the supporting engagement portion." Okabe does not disclose that "the engagement portions are disposed substantially symmetrically about the supporting engagement portion." Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of claim 6 and its respective dependent claims.

Okabe does not disclose or suggest the invention claimed in independent claim 7. For example, independent claim 7 recites, among other things, that "the lever is outwardly fitted to the first connector, an engagement portion on the second connector engages the lever, and the engagement portion is thinner than the first connector." Okabe does not disclose that the engagement step 37, the only alleged engagement portion identified by the Examiner on page 3 of the Office Action that is not on a connector that engages the lever, "is thinner than the first connector." In fact, as can be seen in Fig. 3 of the present application, the space engaging the engagement projection 4b on the female connector 2 (thickness c) is thicker than the male connector (thickness a). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of claim 7 and its respective dependent claims.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

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The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In discussing the specification, claims, abstract, and drawings in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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